

# RECLAMATION


*Managing Water in the West*

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### Jalama Weir/Salsipuedes Creek Fish Ladder Wooden Structure Removal – Cachuma Project

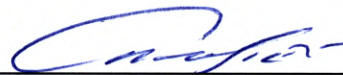
FONSI-10-110

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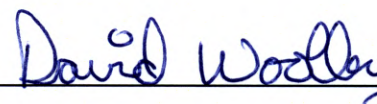
Date: 1/18/2011

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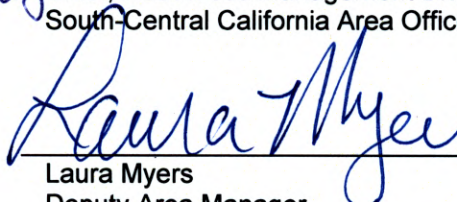
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U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
South-Central California Area Office

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## Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that removing temporary wooden boards from an existing concrete weir/fish ladder is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) number EA-10-110, *Jalama Weir/Salsipuedes Creek Fish Ladder Wooden Structure Removal – Cachuma Project*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

## Background

In 1999, Reclamation initiated formal consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for continued operation and maintenance of the Cachuma Project on the lower Santa Ynez River and potential impacts to Southern California Distinct Population Segment (DPS) steelhead and critical habitat. On September 8, 2000, NMFS issued a Biological Opinion (BO) containing a list of reasonable and prudent measures (RPM), each accompanied by terms and conditions (T&Cs) to satisfactorily meet the standards of the RPM and comply with the BO.

In accordance with RMP #8 and corresponding T&Cs of the NMFS BO, the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board (COMB), on Reclamation's behalf, constructed a weir and fish ladder concrete structure on Salsipuedes Creek (which is a tributary to the Santa Ynez River) near Jalama Bridge in January 2004 to improve passage around an impediment barrier for Southern California DPS steelhead. The concrete structure includes three step pools and four weirs and is referred to as the Jalama Weir and/or Salsipuedes Creek Fish Ladder at Jalama Bridge.

In late 2008, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) placed a temporary structure (wooden boards) against the upper-most weir (weir #4) of the fish ladder. As a result, the height of the weir was increased, thereby adding to the height required by Southern California DPS steelhead to pass through the fish ladder. This action was taken reportedly to increase the area inundated above Jalama Weir to benefit California red-legged frog (CRLF; *Rana draytonii*) habitat. No permit was issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and neither NMFS or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) were consulted on the potential effects of the action to listed species including CRLF and Southern California DPS steelhead.

In the absence of any known investigation or enforcement action having been initiated by the regulatory authorities (Corps, NMFS, and/or Service) on DFG's action, and as a consequence of the perceived adverse impact to Reclamation and COMB's efforts to benefit steelhead in the lower Santa Ynez River Watershed, the wooden boards need to be removed and the fish ladder restored to original design in order to facilitate safe passage of migrating Southern California DPS steelhead at Jalama Weir.

## **Findings**

### **Water Resources**

The Proposed Action does not involve excavation in or fill of Salsipuedes Creek; therefore, no impacts to water quality will occur.

Removal of the wooden boards has the potential to reduce the depth of the pool above the weir by up to 0.85 feet, which is approximately less than 10% of the deepest portions of the pool and up to 30% of the greatest depths of the shallow portions of the pool. This head loss may be slightly greater under high flows in Salsipuedes Creek as the head build under pressure at the weir, but the differential would be small and would decline progressively as one travels upstream and at low flow velocities. The Proposed Action may result in increased flows from the weir structure and impediment barrier, however, the difference in flow velocities are minimal and will not result in significant impacts to water resources.

### **Biological Resources**

The Proposed Action will remove wooden weir plates attached to the Jalama Weir. Removal will lower the jump height by approximately 0.85 feet of the uppermost portion of the weir to comply with original approved design standards. These standards ensure that the jump height for steelhead will be reduced and facilitate steelhead migration. A greater fraction of fish will be able to negotiate passage around the existing passage impediment, thereby allowing for greater utilization of steelhead breeding, and rearing habitat above the impediment. Impacts to steelhead will be wholly beneficial.

The depth of the pool above Jalama Weir will decline slightly, but because of bathymetrics of the pool, there will be minimal change in the surface area and depth of the pool and these changes will not be altered to the degree that it would measurably affect habitat quality for steelhead or CLRF. There will be no significant impacts to CLRF.

### **Cultural Resources**

The Proposed Action is the type of activity that has no potential to affect historic properties. There will be no ground disturbance, work will be completed using hand tools, and work will be confined to an existing weir/fish ladder concrete structure. Since no historic properties will be affected, no cultural resources will be impacted by implementing the Proposed Action.

### **Indian Trust Assets (ITA)**

There are no tribes possessing legal property interests held in trust by the U.S. in the areas involved with the Proposed Action and no construction will be involved; therefore, this action will have no impact on ITA.

### **Indian Sacred Sites**

Since no known Indian sacred sites have been identified, the Proposed Action will not impact known Indian sacred sites and/or prohibit access to and ceremonial use of this resource.

## **Cumulative Impacts**

Since the Proposed Action will not have any impacts on cultural resources, ITA, and Indian sacred sites, there will be no cumulative significant impacts to these resources when taken into consideration other similar past, present, and reasonably foreseeable related actions.

There will be no cumulative significant impacts to water resources since flow conditions will be within historical ranges and will be restored to conditions when Jalama Weir was first constructed, which was analyzed and approved by the Corps.

Cumulative impacts to biological resources in the Lower Santa Ynez River watershed are occurring from gradual development in all drainages, including that of Salsipuedes creek, although the developmental pressures in the Salsipuedes drainage are relatively low. Where overgrazing, agricultural and developmental activities occur, there is increased runoff and siltation to the creek which affects suitability for steelhead. However, increased conservation awareness has been generated through outreach by the Cachuma Conservation Reserve Board (CCRB). CCRB personnel have improved landowner awareness of such issues and projects to improve passage on Salsipuedes Creek for steelhead have enhanced the amount of habitat available to steelhead. The Proposed Action will cumulatively add to beneficial impacts of recent passage enhancements, by restoring the weir to its approved and permitted design, which itself was intended to contribute cumulatively to the benefit of steelhead utilization of the habitat in the Salsipuedes drainage. Cumulative impacts to CRLF through the change to the water level in the small area of the pool will be extremely minor and completely within the range of natural changes that occur annually, given the hydrologic dynamics of the Salsipuedes Creek drainage.